

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NEA-06 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05

CIAE-00 SP-02 EB-03 RSC-01 /045 W

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R 161346Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7282

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

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AMEMBASSY ROME

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 00738

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF, EEC, GW

SUBJECT: EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE

REF: BONN 19233

SUMMARY: FON OFF COORDINATOR FOR EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE,
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AMBASSADOR SCHIRMER BELIEVES ARAB MOVE TO OBTAIN

OBSERVER STATUS FOR PLO HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY FENDED OFF AND TAKES RATHER OPTIMISTIC VIEW OF PROSPECTS FOR STARTING DIALOGUE ON LEVEL OF WORKING GROUPS, THUS CIRCUMVENTING FOR TIME BEING PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH GENERAL COMMITTEE. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBOFF CALLED ON SCHIRMER JANUARY 15, IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE LATTER'S RETURN FROM VACATION, TO DISCUSS HIS VIEW OF PROSPECTS FOR THE EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE. SCHIRMER ACKNOWLEDGED THE PRESENT IMPASSE, SAYING THAT ONLY THE FRENCH AND, TO A LESSER EXTENT, THE ITALIANS HAD SERIOUSLY PRESSED FOR ACCEPTANCE OF THE ARAB DEMAND FOR OBSERVER STATUS FOR THE PLO ON THE GENERAL COMMITTEE. ALL THE OTHERS, HE SAID, WERE MORE OR LESS IN LINE WITH THE FRG IN OPPOSITION--ALTHOUGH HE DID HINT THAT, OF ALL THE FOREIGN MINISTERS, GENSCHER'S NEGATIVE POSITION SEEMED TO BE THE FIRMEST.

2. BECAUSE OF THESE DIFFERENCES OF VIEW WITHIN THE EC, SCHIRMER SAID, THE "DIALOGUE" HAD LARGELY BEEN AN INTERNAL EUROPEAN ONE SO FAR. HE THOUGHT THE SITUATION WOULD EASE SOMEWHAT NOW THAT THE FRENCH HAD HANDED THE PRESIDENCY OVER TO THE IRISH. THERE WOULD, IN HIS VIEW, NOW BE LESS COMPULSION IN PARIS TO USE THIS AS ONE MORE ISSUE ON WHICH TO PRESS FOR A POSITION THAT COULD ONLY BE UNWELCOME TO THE U.S. IF THIS PROVED TRUE, THEN THE TASK OF THE EUROPEANS WOULD BE TO PERSUADE THE ARABS THAT IT WAS NOT IN THEIR INTEREST TO TRY TO USE THE DIALOGUE AS A FORUM FOR ENHANCING THE INTERNATIONAL STATUS OF THE PLO. THE POINT WAS NOT THAT THE EUROPEANS WERE NECESSARILY REJECTING THE PLO AS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE BUT THAT A NON-POLITICAL DIALOGUE WAS NOT THE RIGHT PLACE TO DECIDE THIS ISSUE.

3. SCHIRMER THOUGHT THE CHANCES WERE GOOD THAT THE ARABS WOULD EVENTUALLY ACCEPT THIS POINT OF VIEW, SINCE THEY HAD A GENUINE SUBSTANTIVE INTEREST IN THE DIALOGUE QUITE APART FROM ANY POLITICAL LEVERAGE THEY HAD THOUGHT IT MIGHT GIVE THEM. THEIR INTEREST LAY IN FINDING A

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VEHICLE FOR BALANCING THE EURO-ARAB RELATIONSHIP IN SUCH A WAY THAT IT WOULD NOT BE HOPELESSLY WEIGHTED IN FAVOR OF THE LARGE OIL-PRODUCING COUNTRIES. THE LATTER, IN A SENSE, DID NOT NEED THE DIALOGUE. THEIR MONEY SPOKE FOR ITSELF AND THEY WOULD CONCLUDE BIG DEALS WITH EUROPE UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. THE FINANCIALLY WEAKER ARAB COUNTRIES, HOWEVER, WANTED A MECHANISM THAT WOULD HELP TO ENSURE THAT THEY GOT A SHARE OF THE BENEFITS. THIS

WAS PARTICULARLY SO, SCHIRMER THOUGHT, IN THE AREA OF
INFRASTRUCTURAL IMPROVEMENTS AND THE ASSOCIATED
TECHNOLOGY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: RELATION WITH REGIONAL ORGS, MEETING OBSERVERS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BONN00738
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750017-0529
From: BONN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750148/aaaabppj.tel
Line Count: 119
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 75 BONN 19233
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09 APR 2003 by MartinML>; APPROVED <10 APR 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE
TAGS: PFOR, XF, GE, EEC, PLO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006